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DE RUEHLM #0592 1091255
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5887
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0344
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0043
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7022
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5107
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3679
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0865
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3759
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1060
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2840
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7597
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5298
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0184
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1971
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000592

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR S GROFF, D NASSIRY, E BURKE AND F REID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/19/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PHUM MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: AIR FORCE HITS LTTE POSITIONS IN JAFFNA
AND ON FORWARD DEFENSE LINE

Classified By: DCM James R. Moore for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (SBU) The local wire service reported April 19 that the Sri Lanka Air Force bombed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) gun positions in Palai (in the Jaffna peninsula, near the Forward Defense Line, or FDL) and in Mullaitivu in the East. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission also reported the raids on Mullaitivu, adding that at approximately 10:30 am the Air Force (SLAF) attacked LTTE "hideouts" in Muhamalai, on the FDL. The SLAF spokesman, Group Captain Ajantha De Silva, acknowledged the aerial bombings, but said no casualty assessment was available. Perhaps anticipating concern over aerial bombing in heavily populated areas along the FDL, De Silva stated that the Air Force engaged in precision bombing, successfully hitting all three of their targets.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: Attacks along the FDL could be an early indication of a probing attack by the military from their positions in the Jaffna peninsula into Tiger-controlled territory. The Army (SLA) has an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers in the Jaffna peninsula, with an unknown number massed along the southern border of LTTE-controlled territory in the Vanni as well. SLA deep penetration units have been probing the southern portion of Tiger-controlled areas along the Mannar-Vavuniya road for months. Previous bombing raids reported in recent days to the east of the de facto LTTE capital Kilinochchi may have been attempts to eliminate the LTTE's nascent air force.

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